



H.R. 5151 – WILD MONONGAHELA ACT: A NATIONAL LEGACY FOR WEST VIRGINIA'S SPECIAL PLACES

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 5151 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Nick Rahall (D-WV) on January 29, 2008. The House Committee on Natural Resources approved the bill, as amended, by voice vote on April 2, 2008.

H.R. 5151 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on April 22, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 5151 designates 37,771 acres of National Forest System Lands in the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia as wilderness. The lands are to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture according to the Wilderness Act (P.L. 88-577). Additionally, the bill requires the Secretary to submit a report to Congress within two years of H.R. 5151's enactment detailing a plan to create a non-motorized recreational trail on non-wilderness lands within the Monongahela National Forest.

BACKGROUND

The Monongahela National Forest comprises over 919,000 acres of federal land in 10 counties of the eastern portion of West Virginia. The forest contains 23 campgrounds, 17 picnic areas, and more than 500 miles of hiking trails. In addition, the forest has 129 miles of warm water fishing and 576 miles of trout streams, and 90% of the trout waters of West Virginia are within the forest. The headwaters of six major river systems are located in the forest: Monongahela, Potomac, Greenbrier, Elk, Tygart, and Gauley. The forest hosts approximately 3 million visitors annually and contains five federally designated wilderness areas.

The Wilderness Act defines lands designated as "wilderness" areas as undisturbed and undeveloped federal lands. Generally, commercial activities, motorized access, and the development of roads and structures are generally prohibited on lands designated as wilderness areas. About 29% of the land in the U.S. is federally owned, and over 17% of federally owned land has been designated as wilderness. The Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, and agencies of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture manage these 107 million acres of designated wilderness.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office "estimates that implementing the bill would cost \$1.4 million over the 2009-2013 period."

[Full CBO cost estimate for H.R. 5151.](#)

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